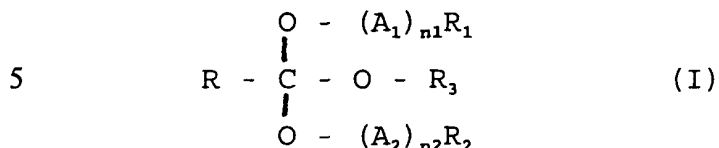


We claim:

1. An ortho ester surfactant of the formula



where R is hydrogen or an aliphatic group with 1-7 carbon atoms; R₁ is hydrogen or an alkyl group with 1-5 carbon atoms; A₁ is an alkyleneoxy group with 2-4 carbon atoms, the number of ethyleneoxy groups being at least 50% of the total number of alkyleneoxy groups; n₁ is a number between 1 and 30; R₂ is an aliphatic group with 5-22 carbon atoms; A₂ is an alkyleneoxy group with 3-4 carbon atoms; n₂ is a number between 0-30, provided that when R₂ is an aliphatic group with 5-6 carbon atoms n₂ is at least 1; R₃ is selected from the group consisting of (A₁)_{n₁}R₁, (A₂)_{n₂}R₂ and an alkyl group with 1-6 carbon atoms, where A₁, n₁, R₁, A₂, n₂ and R₂ have the same meaning as mentioned above; or a di- or poly-condensate via any of the free hydroxy groups of the ortho ester.

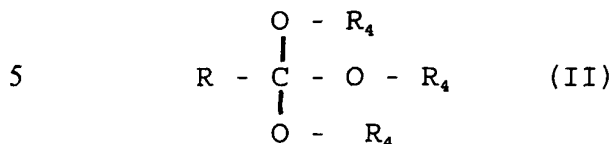
2. The ortho ester surfactant of claim 1, wherein R₁ is an alkyl group with 1-4 carbon atoms.

3. The ortho ester surfactant of claim 1 wherein n₁ is a number between 2-25 and n₂ is a number between 0-20.

4. The ortho ester surfactant of claim 1 wherein n₂ is 0, R₂ is an aliphatic group with 8-22 carbon atoms and A₁ is an ethyleneoxy group.

5. A process for the preparation of the ortho ester

surfactant of claims 1 which comprises reacting an ortho ester of the general formula



where R is hydrogen or an aliphatic group with 1-7 carbon atoms and R₄ is an alkyl group with 1-6 carbon atoms, in one or several steps, with reactants having the formulas
 10 HO(A₁)_{n₁}R₁ and HO(A₂)_{n₂}R₂, wherein R₁ is hydrogen or an alkyl group with 1-5 carbon atoms; R₂ is an aliphatic group with 5-22 carbon atoms; A₂ is an alkyleneoxy group with 3-4 carbon atoms; A₁ is an alkyleneoxy group with 2-4 carbon atoms, the number of ethyleneoxy groups being at least 50% of the total
 15 number of alkyleneoxy groups; n₁ is a number between 1 and 30; and n₂ is a number between 0-30, provided that when R₂ is an aliphatic group with 5-6 carbon atoms n₂ is at least 1, while evaporating alcohols with the formula R₄OH, where R₄ has the same meaning as above.

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6. An emulsifying agent which comprises at least one ortho ester of claims 1.

7. A dispersing agent which comprises at least one
 25 ortho ester of claims 1.

8. A cleaning or scouring composition which comprises the ortho ester of claim 1.

30 9. A method of separating a hydrophobic component from an aqueous system which comprises
 a) emulsifying or dispersing said hydrophobic component in said aqueous system at a pH of 6 or above in the

presence of an ortho ester in accordance with claim 1,

- b) lowering the pH or increasing the temperature of the emulsion or dispersion resulting from step a), or a combination thereof, and thereby breaking the emulsion or dispersion, and
- 5 c) separating the hydrophobic component from the aqueous system.

10 10. The method of claim 9 wherein the temperature in step b is raised to between 20 and 60°C.

11. The method of claim 9 wherein the pH in step b is between 4 and 6.

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12. A dyeing or deinking process which comprises the use of at least one ortho ester of claim 1.

13. A pesticidal formulation which comprises at least one ortho ester of claim 1.

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